



USA ON THE MOVE: STEPS TO HEALTHY AGING

GOAL: As a part of the [President's HealthierUS Initiative](#), *USA on the Move: Steps to Healthy Aging* is a two-part project sponsored by the Administration on Aging (AoA) and the National Policy and Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging (Center) at Florida International University. It is designed to improve nutrition and physical activity in older adults. Simple, modest increases in daily activities can improve overall health, prevent disease and disability, and reduce health care costs for our nation.

WHY: Poor health is not a foregone consequence of aging. An active healthy lifestyle is a key component to successful aging. *Eating Better & Moving More*, the two steps in *Steps to Healthy Aging*, can help even frail older adults prolong their independence and improve their quality of life. Caregivers of family members, who often neglect their own physical, nutritional, and mental health, can also benefit from *Eating Better & Moving More*.

Health:

- ❑ Physical inactivity and poor diets are the major causes of America's overweight and obesity epidemic. Since 1990, the prevalence of obesity has increased 50%. Forty percent of older adults are overweight and 18% are obese.
- ❑ Obesity increases chronic disease risk, decreases functionality and independence, and lowers quality of life.
- ❑ Medicare and Medicaid programs spend \$84 billion annually on five major chronic conditions that could be significantly improved through increased physical activity and improved nutrition: diabetes, heart disease, cancer, depression, and arthritis.
- ❑ Sedentary lifestyles and inadequate diets account for 14% of all deaths in the United States.

Nutrition:

- ❑ Good nutrition prolongs independence by maintaining hearing and vision, cognitive abilities, physical strength, mobility, and endurance.

- ❑ Good nutrition promotes health by lowering chronic disease risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and osteoporosis.
- ❑ Eighty-seven percent of older Americans have one or more chronic diseases that can be improved by nutrition therapy, including cancer, chronic lung disease, congestive heart failure, dementia, diabetes mellitus, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, obesity, and overweight.
- ❑ Forty percent of community-residing older Americans eat poorly. For example, three-fourths of African American and two-thirds of white older Americans eat less than the 5 recommended servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- ❑ Up to two-thirds of hip fractures are due to inadequate calcium intake.
- ❑ Fifty percent of older caregivers are at nutritional risk and would benefit from nutrition interventions.

Physical Activity:

- ❑ Regular physical activity sustains the ability of older adults to live independently.
- ❑ One-third of older adults are inactive. Older women are less active than older men. African American older adults are less active than white older adults.
- ❑ Regular physical activity benefits individuals with arthritis and those with depression and anxiety. It may reduce the risk of cognitive decline in older adults.
- ❑ Physical activity is effective in treating heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, chronic lung disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity and overweight, and arthritis.
- ❑ Regular physical activity can improve the mobility and functioning of frail and very old adults. Weight training, flexibility, and endurance activities can also reduce the risk of fall injuries.
- ❑ Osteoporosis can be delayed or prevented by moderate walking. Two million men suffer from osteoporosis; it is not just a woman's disease.

HOW:

Eating Better: This part of *Steps to Healthy Aging* will encourage older adults to eat healthier. State units on aging are collecting healthy recipes and tips from Older Americans Nutrition Program participants and projects. Recipes will be easy to prepare, low cost, tasty, and nutrient-dense. Ethnic and familiar favorites will be featured. Tips will emphasize food safety, healthy eating, simple cooking methods, and ways to gain/lose weight. AoA and the Center will publish a *Guide to Eating Better*.

Moving More: This part of *Steps to Healthy Aging* is modeled after *Colorado on the Move*TM, a statewide lifestyle initiative to improve health through increased physical activity. It uses step counters to inspire older adults to walk more. The Center will collect step data from Aging Network nutritionists and administrators over 8 weeks as well as input from them on how to customize program goals for a number of steps per day based on age, functional ability, cultural preferences or health status. The Center will also collect data from a pilot step program with older adults at a senior center in Florida. AoA and the Center will publish a *Guide to Moving More*.



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